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Editorial

TAKING ACCOUNT OF STOCK

Changes have been coming so rapidly in the educational world in recent years, and the individual teacher is so apt to be absorbed in the immediate task, that it is worth while occasionally to pause for a survey of the situation as a whole. In particular, three things stand out.

1. The changed constituency of the high schools and colleges. Once these institutions were for the favored few, who came from cultured families, and who were looking to literary and professional careers. Now they are receiving vast multitudes of students with no cultural background and a distinctly commercial aim, or with a cultural background and no special aim. Students of the old type do appear here and there, but they are in a very small minority.

2. The enlarged compass of the curriculum. Even the smallest high schools feel that they must offer some of "the newer subjects," and the universities open up a maze of opportunity in which it is almost easier to lose than to hold to the right way.

3. The changed attitude of the younger generation toward its elders. This item is entered here, not as a complaint, but as a fact to be reckoned with. A generation or two ago, parent and teacher, on the basis of their more extensive experience, mapped out a program for the child, and to this he was required to adhere, whether it suited his present inclination or not. Now there is

much less evidence of such supervision, and certainly much less soldierlike obedience and deference to the opinions of the older and the better informed.

Closely connected with the foregoing considerations are three other developments.

1. Reaction against the old standard studies. No longer required to take hard subjects the usefulness of which he does not see, even the non-vocational student drifts about in search of the study that will secure for him the necessary "credit," with a maximum of amusement and a minimum of effort.

2. Flourishing growth of a school of pedagogy that keeps its ear close to the ground, and discovers what ought to be in what actually is. Such "prophets" are found in every generation, just as, in the time of the Civil War, the clergy of the south justified the institution of slavery out of the same book from which their colleagues of the north derived their abolition doctrine; in either case the preacher developed a theory that pleased his audience. The children of the present generation find the immediate comfort of living much enhanced by an influential school of pedagogy that announces as its sober conclusion that a child forced to do some task he resents is *ipso facto* a "bad child," whereas he becomes at once a "good child" if allowed to follow his own whim, with no fretting attention from those who see that he ought to be doing something else.

3. The prevalence of the "common requirement." With the greatly increased student enrolment, the diversity of type and aim, and the much expanded curriculum, it is by no means easy to find an adjustment that will work ideally for all. The radicals are inclined to wipe the slate clean, throwing over entirely the program of the old high school and college, and building from the bottom up a new structure of "basal" subjects. This in theory has some show of logic; and, for that reason, it is the more dangerous to the cause of cultural education. For it almost inevitably happens that the adoption of a "common requirement" means the elimination of the distinctive and real disciplines. Thus, physics can hardly figure in a "common requirement" at any point, because for some it is too hard, others do not like it, etc.; but "general"

science just fills the bill, though, through its prescription, those who need physics are deprived of the opportunity to pursue that study, while three-fourths of the class simply fritter away their time on science so-called. As things are at present administered, "common requirement" is synonymous with a lowering of the standard.

All these things affect the teaching of the classics profoundly. In the small high school, the principal, if well disposed, is at his wits' end to find a teacher for limited classes in Latin, while throngs demand typewriting and foundry work; and if he is ill disposed, the educational expert will supply him all the justification he needs for dropping the Latin. The outside public is apathetic or hostile. The student body in general feels the lure of the easier manual subjects; and a "common entrance requirement" perhaps relieves even the prospective college student of the need of taking Latin.

In the universities, too, general cultural education is gradually being eliminated, partly because of the school situation just described, partly because the universities themselves are becoming great vocational institutions. The professional schools, which at one time were superimposed upon the college or university, are now encroaching downward by appropriating the last year or two of the college course as a part of the professional curriculum; and very lately, even in the Freshman year, students are beginning to be segregated as "pre-legal," "pre-medical," etc., so that they may be advised to take only such work as prepares definitely and directly for their chosen calling. Thus cultural education is being crushed between the upper and the nether stone of the mill.

What shall be done in these premises? The problems presented are far too great to be solved by individual effort. Here and there a teacher of unusual talent or with unusual opportunities may achieve conspicuous success in the teaching of the classics; and in such success we all rejoice. But to save the situation as a whole, it will be necessary to heed the old adage "in union there is strength."

To that end, let every teacher of the classics, who is more than a hireling, take out a membership in one of the four regional classical associations. If nothing more, this will bring him the

official organ of the local association, and keep him abreast of the times in regard to matters of professional interest.

By adding twenty-five cents when remitting dues to the secretary, a member of any of the regional associations may be enrolled also in the American Classical League, a national organization that aims to correlate and reinforce the various agencies operating in the interests of the classics in various parts of the country.

In addition to helping the cause by doing good individual work, each teacher should have a hand in the collective effort represented by the associations above referred to. A few of the important problems now engaging attention are the following:

1. Safeguarding the classics in the large cities. Under this head will be noted with interest the establishment of a six-year classical high school in Cincinnati. Such separation is possible in a large city, and the example may be followed elsewhere. The problem of the one-school town is different.

2. The appointment to executive positions in the school system of men of vision, who see all sides of a subject, and who are not swept off their feet by shallow theorizing.

3. Adjustment of the teaching of the classics to the needs of the larger constituency of the modern high school, e.g., in the matter of the correlation of Latin and English.

4. The adoption of an international language as a means for communication between scholars in all fields. For this purpose Latin is in some ways specially qualified. Plans are on foot to have its claims fully presented at this time, when scientific bodies all over the world are working on the problem of an international medium of communication.

In the case of such projects as these, the need for co-operative action is obvious. Let every teacher do his part.